

On Reading

The 'why' and 'how' of reading for Christians who find it hard

Why read?

To learn from great teachers

Reading lets you sit at the feet of some of the great Christian teachers and minds over the centuries.

To become a better reader

The ability to read with understanding does not come intuitively – it is a skill that must be learned, just like speaking and writing. The more we practice, the better we become. The greater our ability to read, the better we can read the Bible with understanding.

To understand the Bible better as we read how other Christians have grappled with the meaning in a passage.

Because of the example set by the Apostle Paul, who wrote a large part of the New Testament and had been preaching for 30 years, yet still wanted his books with him (2 Timothy 4:13).

To train your mind, broaden your vocabulary, cultivate an improved imagination and actively engage your mind. It can also help you develop a sense of how arguments are constructed and the ability to weigh the strength of arguments.

To be encouraged in your walk as a Christian as you read of the fruit that the gospel has produced in the lives of others.

To get to know God better

You'll grow in your knowledge of God, yourself and the world around you. You'll enjoy spiritual input during the week, not just on a Sunday.

To step outside the bubble that you live in

Reading books written by authors in another culture and from another generation can give you a historical perspective on current problems and help you see present day blind spots. They may be able to answer some of your questions and may address other questions you hadn't even thought of.

To expose your ignorance

Good books, like faithful friends and good churches, inform us of truth, exposing our ignorance.

For pleasure

Reading can be deeply enjoyable.

Top tips

Read great books rather than many books. Life is too short to read everything that has been written, so you'll have to decide which books to read and which to leave unread. Why not make it your aim to read the best books you can get your hands on?

Make time to read

If you leave reading to when you've nothing else to do, you'll rarely do it. For many, the problem is not a lack of time but rather a lack of planning. If you read a page a day, you'd read 2 books a year. If you read for 20 minutes each day, you'd get through 15 books a year! Be flexible and creative with planning your reading.

Salvage dead time by carrying a book with you when you are on the bus or the train.

Read together with someone else or a in a group. Meeting to chat about what you've read will help you spur each other on and improve your learning.

Change books if your concentration is drifting or you find yourself falling asleep. The change of topic will often re-engage your mind and keep you awake.

Start reading a book even if you aren't sure you can finish it. Reading the first couple of chapters of a book is almost always better than not reading any of it. Reading the beginning of the book should give you a good idea what the book is about, which means you'll know in the future what books to turn to for help on a given subject.